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# **[Ir]responsible Leadership: Addressing Management and Leadership Curricula Biases**

Research Report January 2016

The logo for iRLcd is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font against a solid blue rectangular background. The letters 'i', 'R', 'L', and 'c' are lowercase, while 'd' is lowercase. The 'i' has a dot.

[Ir]responsible Leadership Curriculum Development

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IRLCD members are members of the British Academy of Management's  
Leadership and Leadership Development SIG, and  
Responsible Leadership Collaboratory

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## List of Abbreviations

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<b>BAM</b>	British Academy of Management
<b>BOS</b>	Broader Organizational Support
<b>BT</b>	British Telecom
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CIPD</b>	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>CSI</b>	Corporate Social Irresponsibility
<b>EMBA</b> s	Executive MBAs
<b>FIFA</b>	Fédération International de Football Association (French)
<b>HRM</b>	Human Resource Management
<b>IL</b>	Irresponsible Leadership
<b>IRLCD</b>	[Ir]responsible Leadership Curricula Development
<b>LLD</b>	Leadership Learning and Development
<b>LMD</b>	Leadership and Management Development
<b>MBA</b>	Master of Business Administration
<b>MNC</b> s	Multinational Corporations
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NGO</b> s	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>P/A</b>	Perception/Attitude
<b>PDW</b>	Professional Development Workshop
<b>PBL</b>	Practice-based Learning
<b>QAA</b>	Quality Assurance Agency (for Higher Education)
<b>RL</b>	Responsible Leadership
<b>R</b>	Role
<b>T/D</b>	Training/Development
<b>BAT</b>	British American Tobacco
<b>TEFs</b>	Teacher Evaluation Forms
<b>VW</b>	Volkswagen
<b>WBL</b>	Work-based Learning
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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## About the IRLCD

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The [Ir]responsible Leadership Curriculum Development (IRLCD) collaborative group work together as a professional network/forum to discuss and evaluate research and practice vis-à-vis irresponsible/responsible leadership in curricula development for sustainability teaching, learning, and strategy. The group was formed as an outcome of the BAM Responsible Leadership Collaboratory on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015 in London.

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## Summary

Irresponsible leadership (IL) research vis-a-vis curricular development in management education receives a modicum of attention, particularly in comparison to responsible leadership (RL). At best, IL is embedded in topics such as leadership and management development, corporate social responsibility (CSR) or business ethics.

The report problematizes IL embeddedness and examines irresponsible leader behaviors and practices, particularly through the lens of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the context of CSR/CSI (corporate social irresponsibility). IL is defined, and the authors argue for stand-alone IL courses in the management/leadership curricula, as embedding alone does very little to reflect the growing problems associated with IL behavior and practices. Hence, management curricula bias is addressed by emphasizing the criticality of IL education to improve RL understanding, pedagogy, and professional practices in work organizations.

The authors adopt a bricolage philosophy which allows for ontological and epistemological flexibility, useful for investigating under-researched issues.

The targeted audiences are people involved in management/leadership education, learning and development, including academics involved in curricula development studies, as well as management consultants, and HR partners.

*Key words: Irresponsible leadership, Responsible Leadership, HRM, Management, Curricula development, Higher Education, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Irresponsibility, Sustainability Teaching and Learning*





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## Introduction

In their study which focused on the changing nature of responsible education within UK business schools, Burchell et al (2015) argued that business schools in the UK [*“still had a significant way to go before suggesting that responsible management provision is a standard part of UK business school curricula p486”*]. The issue of responsible management/leadership has been posed within a number of fields, including human resource management (Martins, 2007), and business management subjects such as business ethics, and CSR (Blowfield and Murray, 2011). It is a subject that is strongly promoted by different management, and educational bodies in the UK and abroad. For example, global, regional and national initiatives such as the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education (UN PRME), national bodies such as QAA (see QAA 2014 Education for Sustainable Development: Guidance for UK higher education providers), and the CIPD standards for human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) encourage business schools to incorporate subjects of responsibility in management education. Furthermore, recent reports on the state of ethical education and guidance in the UK academia such as the Higher Education Academy report on ethics education in business schools (Bell et al, 2014). The Association of Business Schools’ Ethics Guide (ABS, 2012) also emphasizes the significance of ethics education. Hence, there is no doubt that Business Schools have increasingly recognized the importance of teaching responsible management/leadership as a subject, and draw attention to [ir]responsible practices and behaviors through subjects such as HRM, business ethics, ethical studies, CSR and sustainable business in management education.

Despite calls for management educators to do more to develop holistic leadership very little has been done to directly include subjects to the management curricula which add clarity to responsible leadership in the HE curriculum. Aside from the analytical and conceptual domains of leadership, holistic leadership theory advocates the spiritual and emotional domains, which allude to responsible leadership, hence attempt to address IL. Yet business schools still struggle to include the subject of spiritual leadership in their curriculum (Quatro et al, 2007). Similarly, and more importantly given the context of this report, irresponsible leadership studies have also failed to appear directly in management/leadership curricula.

In view of the curricula dilemma, this report introduces several pertinent concepts worth considering for future IL curriculum research. These are IL curriculum development, design, and identification of essential course content in UK Business Schools and those across the globe. In particular, the report explores the following propositions for IL curriculum development:

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*1. The need to highlight and review cases of Irresponsible Leadership:* Despite the increase of responsible leadership education and training (RLET) in the UK and abroad, research shows that IL is growing in many work organizations in the UK and globally. This has been phenomenally costly to organizations, businesses, and the economy of various countries. CSR has been identified as an area within business management where IL practices in this regard are rife. To provide case examples of irresponsible leadership behaviors and practices, the authors have selected CSR and CSI research as focal points for presenting pertinent examples of how research can influence curriculum design, development and decisions regarding content. The CSR/CSI case examples are used to identify commonalities emerging from empirically based literature. In doing so, the authors draw attention to the implications for IL curriculum development.

*2. The need to distinguish between responsible and irresponsible leadership:* This is based on the premise that in order to better understand RL and address curricula bias, IL needs to be clearly understood. Given the plethora of terms used in the literature which describe IL, for example, corporate psychopaths (Boddy, 2011) negative side of leadership, destructive leadership, narcissistic leadership, and abusive supervision (Maccoby, 2007; Harris et al, 2013) it is worth addressing what irresponsible leadership is, and how it is manifested.

*3. The need to address management curricula biases:* This is based on the premise that intellectual integrity is compromised when curricula biases are ignored. Curricula issues relate to how a body of knowledge is transmitted in business schools. In particular, why and how the RL/IL courses on offer are chosen, designed and delivered. The authors observed that there is a considerably large amount of attention paid to RL in the management/Leadership curricula without much attention given to IL. Hence the absence of direct inclusion of explicit IL courses suggests biases. If nothing else, by tackling curriculum biases the report opens an important and timely discussion on pedagogical/andragogical approaches as well as classroom engagement in vis-à-vis IL.

*4. The need to understand pedagogical approaches, and classroom engagement regarding IL education:* Learning experiences such as reflection, sharing practical experiences amongst management students can encourage students to explore cognitive and non-cognitive managerial influences on ethical decision making (AACSB, 2004). In this report the authors considered the approaches to teaching IL that can help students to explore their future responsibilities as business leaders and/or managerial leaders. The debates about and distinctions made between pedagogy and andragogy (Day et al, 2009) were also considered in line with the LLD/LMD literature given the discourses on the critical and alternative approaches in this regard. However, since this report deals with human learning particularly at postgraduate

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level and final year undergraduate levels, the authors adopt the term ped-andragogy to mean the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept in relation to adult learners. Notwithstanding, the andragogical and pedagogical debate is beyond the scope of this report.



